

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Staffordshire University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 3 Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving spiritual care in healthcare settings		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 16 Aug 2008 – 31 Dec 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Names:</b> Prof. Wilf McSherry Dr. Adam Boughey	<b>Roles:</b> Professor in Nursing Lecturer in Adult Nursing	<b>Periods employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2008-present 2017-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 21 December 2016 to 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> This case study describes how our research on spiritual education for undergraduate nurses/midwives has improved their ability to deliver holistic, person-centred care. Our work has resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education curriculum change:</b> Developed a Spiritual Care Education Standard, comprising of four competences, which is now embedded within national and international nursing and midwifery education.</li> <li>• <b>Policy change:</b> Locally, in the delivery of spiritual care in an NHS Trust, and nationally through integration of the Standard across healthcare education programmes in Wales.</li> <li>• <b>Changes in professional practice:</b> Influenced healthcare education provider training and standards around professional competence and capability. Contributed to resources for employees in the national health context and improved international practitioners' ability to provide compassionate care.</li> <li>• <b>Establishment of an international network:</b> <i>'Enhancing nurses' and midwives' competence in providing spiritual care through innovative education and compassionate care'</i> (EPICC). Enhanced cultural understanding of spirituality and empowered nurses/midwives to respond positively and sensitively to personal, religious, and spiritual beliefs of patients.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> The United Kingdom's nursing/midwifery regulator (Nursing and Midwifery Council [NMC]) expects registrants to be competent in assessing and delivering spiritual care at the point of registration (Future Nurse Standards [NMC, 2018]). However, there is contradiction between these standards and the NMC Code (2018), where there is no reference to the word 'spiritual'. This renders unclear the scope, boundaries, and parameters of professional practice in relation to spirituality. Since 2009, several high-profile cases have ensued where nurses have addressed the NMC professional conduct committee due to <i>inappropriate</i> personal, religious, and spiritual care. These cases further illustrate the need for strengthening understanding, education, and practice in addressing spirituality in healthcare.</p> <p>Since 2008, <b>McSherry</b> has undertaken research in this area at Staffordshire University, largely in collaboration with Prof. Linda Ross (University of South Wales). Between 2008-2019, this research was awarded a total of GBP244,671, including EUR242,093 (GBP218,704) from the Erasmus+ K2 Programme. A total of 6 studies have underpinned the impact, as follows.</p> <p><b>Online spiritual survey</b> In 2010, <b>McSherry</b> was invited to lead the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) online spirituality survey investigating members' perceptions of spirituality. A total of 4,058 people participated [3.1, 3.2]. This survey confirmed his earlier research findings, highlighting educational gaps in nurses' spiritual care knowledge and practice and a requirement for more spirituality guidance/support from the NMC and RCN.</p> <p><b>International application of the spiritual survey:</b> Since the 2010 UK survey, McSherry has used the methodology in international studies, which have included different health settings (e.g., nursing, trauma, and psychiatry), in Australia [3.3] and New Zealand [3.4].</p> <p><b>Pilot and longitudinal studies: International nursing and midwifery education:</b> From 2010-2019, the research focused on how nursing/midwifery programmes prepare students to provide spiritual care. Piloting was undertaken in 2010 [3.5]; with the longitudinal study [3.6] between</p>		

2011-2015, across 21 universities in 8 European countries (2,193 people participated). This research was the first to evidence that perceptions of spiritual care competence can be developed in undergraduate nursing/midwifery students, supporting integration of this dimension within nursing/midwifery curricula.

**Establishing international best practice in spiritual care:** In 2016, **McSherry** and Ross, with members of European Spirituality Research Network (ESRN) and Prof. Tormod Kleiven (Diakonova University College), secured Erasmus+ K2 Strategic Partnership funding to review and establish best practice in the teaching of spiritual care.

### 3. References to the research

- [3.1] McSherry, W., & Jamieson, S. (2011). An online survey of nurses' perceptions of spirituality and spiritual care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 20(11-12), 1757-67. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6168>.
- [3.2] McSherry, W., & Jamieson, S. (2013). The qualitative findings from an online survey investigating nurses' perceptions of spirituality and spiritual care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 22(21-22), 3170-82. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6167>.
- [3.3] Austin, P., MacLeod, R., Siddall, P., McSherry, W., & Egan, R. (2017). Spiritual care training is needed for clinical and non-clinical staff to manage patients' spiritual needs. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, 7(1), 50-63. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/2979>.
- [3.4] Egan, R., Llewellyn, R., Cox, B., MacLeod, R., McSherry, W., & Austin, P. (2017). New Zealand nurses' perceptions of spirituality and spiritual care: Qualitative findings from a national survey. *Religions*, 8(79), 1-20. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/3205>.
- [3.5] Ross, L., van Leeuwen, R., Baldacchino, D., Giske, T., McSherry, W., Narayanasamy, A., Downes, C., Jarvis, P., & Schep-Akkerman, A. (2014). Student nurses' perceptions of spirituality and competence in delivering spiritual care: A European pilot study. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(5), 697-702. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6171>.
- [3.6] Ross, L., McSherry, W., Giske, T., van Leeuwen, R., Schep-Akkerman, A., Koslander, T., Hall, J., Østergaard Steinfeldt, V., & Jarvis, P. (2018). Nursing and midwifery students' perceptions of spirituality, spiritual care, and spiritual care competency: A prospective, longitudinal, correlational European study. *Nurse Education Today*, 67, 64-71. <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/4529>.

Total funding GBP244,671, 4 grants various organisations including: Principal Investigator Wilf McSherry, 2016-2019 EUR242,093, EPICC, Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership.

### 4. Details of the impact

Primary areas of impact concern **practitioners and the delivery of professional services**. Beneficiaries include nursing/midwifery undergraduates, educators and universities, health/social care practitioners, government, and professional bodies.

#### **EPICC**

In 2016, **McSherry** was Lead Partner in a team of nurse/midwifery educators across six European countries (part of the ESRN). Building on **McSherry's** previous research, their aim was to directly address the need for spirituality in practitioner training. European funding (EUR242,093) was secured through the Erasmus+ K2 Strategic Partnership and led to the launch of the EPICC Project (between September 2016 and July 2019). EPICC brought together 31 people, nursing/midwifery educators ('participants'), and over 60 people as stakeholders ('participants+') from 21 European countries, including other practitioners and students, and representatives from patient organisations, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the RCN.

Participants developed six key outputs through co-production and action learning cycles using a consensus method. Outputs include the EPICC Spiritual Care Education Standard, the EPICC Gold Standard Matrix for Spiritual Care Education, and EPICC Adoption Toolkit. The Standard comprises four competences and the Matrix details the milieu in which competence develops. The Matrix was supported with a narrative document. The Toolkit details a range of education strategies to enable delivery of spiritual care education. A bespoke website was also created as

a repository for project outputs to aid international engagement and dissemination [5.1]. These outputs were launched in July 2019.

The results of the EPICC project have been disseminated via 67 events in 14 countries within Europe, Australia, North and South America, and Asia. Evaluation of its impact includes a survey of EPICC participants and stakeholders [5.2]. The **reach** of the impact can be seen both **geographically** and through use of the EPICC resources to bring about change amongst a more **diverse** range of health professionals [5.2, p6]. It is driven by EPICC project partners utilising EPICC outputs in their work. The partners, along with other wider stakeholders, are part of the EPICC network, which by November 2020 included 77 people as members (23 countries globally) [5.2, p18]. The network offers multiple pathways to impact, such as through a biannual international nursing/midwifery student and educator conference. The resulting impacts can be seen in terms of **policy**, **practice**, and **education**.

## Policy

EPICC competencies have been added to policy in University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust [5.3, pp6, 9, 15] providing direction to approximately 10,000 people, who are members of staff, for addressing spiritual care with patients, relatives, and with other colleagues. This policy states the Trust's understanding of spiritual care and issues of cultural, religious, and pastoral care. Referencing the EPICC website and outputs, the policy also states the EPICC project's definition of spiritual care, including competencies used for assessment and delivery of spiritual care.

## Practice

**Influencing professional body codes of practice:** The research has raised regulatory body (NMC) awareness of the importance of spirituality for nursing as *'the NMC is considering evidence from EPICC supplied by Professors Ross and McSherry in [the] revision of The Code of Practice 2020-2025'* [5.4, p3, section 7].

**Influencing education provider training:** Health Education & Improvement **Wales** (HEIW) are responsible for education of the Welsh healthcare workforce. From September 2020 HEIW are using EPICC outputs to prepare over 2,800 people as Practice Assessors/Supervisors, over 1,000 people as Practice Facilitators, and approximately 33 people as Practice Educator Facilitators to assess students' spiritual care competency in clinical practice [5.4, p2, section 3]. Specifically, the EPICC Standard sets out the competencies expected of students in part 2 of the Practice Supervisor/Practice Assessor Guide (NMC standards for student supervision and assessment, 2018) [5.5, p42]. Assessors are also signposted to the EPICC project website outputs for wider context and evidence. The FAQs section (accessible to download from the HEIW website [5.6]) uses EPICC outputs to guide assessors in preparing students to assess and meet patients' spiritual needs [5.6, p21-22].

**Influencing practice curriculum content:** As of August 2020, the EPICC Standard is now a mandatory requirement of HEIW's preregistration framework tenders all of which must be implemented by 2022, setting out the competencies expected of 892\* people as students for the following professions in **Wales** [5.4, p2, section 5] including the following people: paramedicine (n=75); dietetics (n=60); physiotherapy (n=164); occupational therapy (n=163); speech and language therapy (n=49); podiatry (n=24); diagnostic radiography, therapeutic radiotherapy and oncology (n=162); operating department practitioners (n=49); physician associates (n=60); and all PTP healthcare science programmes (n=86). (\*Numbers of people are indicative based on 2020 commissioned figures).

**Contributing resources for employees in the health context:** Also, in 2020, the EPICC Standard was published [5.7, p33] in updated guidance from the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy (UKBHC) for 365 people, UK registered chaplains. The document stated, 'We follow and adopt their [EPICC project's] definition of spirituality' [5.7, p3]. This Standard is supporting

reflective practice and professional development of 69,853 people, non-specialist spiritual care givers registered with the NMC in **Scotland** in 2019-2020.

**Improving international practitioners' ability to provide compassionate care:** The 2Q-SAM (Two Question Spiritual Assessment Model) developed by Ross and McSherry for the EPICC Toolkit has been used by senior transplant nurse specialists (across the UK) since July 2019 to guide challenging conversations with families who are donating an organ. This tool has helped clinicians to provide compassionate care to patients. The NHS Blood & Transplant Education Team (NBTET) are integrating (November 2020) the tool formally within its national cohort training programmes for Specialist Nurses in Organ Donation and Specialist Requesters that will be launched in 2021 [5.2, p18]. In **Portugal**, the School of Nursing and Research Centre at the University of Porto has used the EPICC Standard and Matrix in teaching since 2019. These tools help students learn to evaluate patient needs. Feedback indicates they have been invaluable '*to promote comfort, adherence to the treatment, delay the memory decline in people with dementia, and help people and caregivers in palliative care*' [5.2, p14].

In **Malta**, the outputs have been used since 2019 with 60 people, midwifery students who encounter women at birth (4,000 births/year). The Head of Department [Midwifery], Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta highlights that the EPICC outputs for students and professionals '*serve as a means of having better relationship with all members of multi-disciplinary teams, shaping the individual in their different roles ... as a teacher, mother, carer. They provide you with the ability to understand and deal with people's inner most concerns, a great resource both on a personal and wider community, social level*' [5.2, p11].

The EPICC Standard has been used in **Kenya** since March 2020 by 30 psychotherapists (employees of the Joedy Foundation) to provide spiritual care through innovative education and compassion when counselling 200 people. This has included children/young people, those affected by clashes, gender-based violence, and school dropouts. The Director of the Foundation states that the Standard '*Creates [a] humble spiritual atmosphere for youths making safe spaces for sharing and solving problems affecting them*'. The organisation's Research Coordinator has used the Standard to deliver pastoral care to 1,000 people who are students, and to care for 400 people who are patients. He states: '*It has given me a deep insight in dealing with the students, youths and the patients by instilling the spiritual care aspect which truly gives a valid and concrete solutions to the cases been handled*' [5.2, p11].

## Education

The EPICC Standard is being used to enhance healthcare education across at least 9 European countries, with an example from **Wales** below.

A representative from the Welsh Government and the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) for Wales facilitated the adoption and implementation of EPICC outputs [5.4]; specifically, with the EPICC Standard and Matrix impacting on education, clinical practice, research, and policy. The Standard features in the revised preregistration nursing/midwifery curricula in all 6 Welsh universities (Swansea, South Wales, Glyndwr, Bangor, Cardiff, Open University). During 2020, EPICC outputs have informed practice assessment documentation for 1,987 people, nursing students (adult=1,400, mental health=356, children's=154, learning disability=77). EPICC outputs are also shaping pre-registration midwifery curricula at all four universities in Wales: Bangor, Cardiff, Swansea, South Wales. This change was initiated in 2020 in readiness for planned intake of around 160 student midwives in 2021 [5.4, p1, section 2]. From September 2020, all nursing/midwifery students at each level of training will need to demonstrate theoretical and clinical competency in the EPICC Standard, and evidence this through the 'Once for Wales 2020 All Wales Practice Assessment Document and Ongoing Record of Achievement for Preregistration Nursing Programmes' [5.8, pp28, 50, 53, 80, 84, 114, 119].

**Changing curriculum content:** Outputs from the EPICC project have informed curriculum development as illustrated below.



Translated EPICC outputs have been used in the **Netherlands** at Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle. Since 2018, the EPICC Standard has been implemented into the Bachelor of Nursing Programme and a specialist nurse practitioner programme for Special Caregivers in Spiritual Care (2,280 people, students). Reach of this impact is also demonstrated through a digital learning programme to other healthcare institutes throughout the Netherlands. The University Director (Healthcare) commented that *'this E-Learning programme is based on the outputs from the EPICC project, as they are very practical e-learning tools. We are leading the way in spiritual care in the Netherlands'* [5.9].

In **Poland**, the EPICC Standard has been translated into Polish by an Associate Professor in Nursing, Medical University in Lublin, and has been available on the Polish Association for Spiritual Care in Medicine website since 2018 [5.10]. Testimonial evidence confirms this translation has been pioneering and has positively impacted Polish healthcare professionals' understanding and awareness of spiritual care: *'Its inclusion on the website sparked a lot [of] interest and led to the beginning of discussion with nurses and other healthcare professionals about the importance of embedding spiritual care into research, education and practice. The translation ... increased awareness with healthcare professionals of their role in the provision of spiritual care'*. The EPICC Standard has been integrated in the undergraduate nursing curriculum since 2017 (450-600 people, students) [5.2, p13-14].

In **Austria**, since 2018 the EPICC Standard has led to new approaches in the training of spiritual care for 230 people (medical students, nursing students, and multidisciplinary teams), working within palliative care at the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre (Paracelsus Medical Private University, Salzburg). The Coordinator is also responsible for educational development in the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) and promotes the EPICC Toolkit during spiritual care reference groups. This includes the use of the 2Q-SAM as a tool in an EAPC white paper for palliative care practitioner education across Europe (7,068 people, adult and children palliative care services in 51/54 countries) [5.2, p8].

In **England**, since late 2018, the University of Huddersfield has integrated the EPICC Standard and tools into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula for around 900 people: students (720 undergraduates: nursing, occupational therapy, psychology; 180 postgraduates: MSc Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Social Workers) [5.2, p9].

In **Spain**, between 2019 and 2020 (where training in spirituality is yet to be addressed in the health system), the University of Alicante used the EPICC Standard as the basis for a new educational intervention, which was evaluated and found to be effective in improving knowledge, competencies, and attitudes in 369 enrolled nursing students [5.11].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] [EPICC homepage](#); [EPICC resources and tools](#).

[5.2] [Use and Value of the EPICC outputs](#): Evaluation including results of two participant and stakeholder surveys (April 2019/July 2020) examples of use of project outputs.

[5.3] University Hospitals of North Midlands, NHS Trust: C47 NHS Spiritual Care Policy (03/19).

[5.4] Testimonial: Chief Nursing Officer for Wales.

[5.5] [HEIW \(2020\)](#) Practice Supervisor/Practice Assessor Guide.

[5.6] [HEIW \(2020\)](#) FAQs: implementation of new NMC standards for education and training.

[5.7] [UKBHC \(2020\)](#) UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy: Spiritual Care Competences for Healthcare Chaplains (2020) Standard for registered chaplains, pp3, 33.

[5.8] [HEIW \(2020\)](#) Practice Assessment Document, pp28, 50, 53, 80, 84, 114, 119.

[5.9] Testimonial: Directeur Academie Health Care, Viaa.

[5.10] [Polish translation: EPICC Standard from Polish Association for Spiritual Care in Medicine](#).

[5.11] [Fernández-Pascual, M. D., Reig-Ferrer, A., & Santos-Ruiz, A. \(2020\). Effectiveness of an educational intervention to teach spiritual care to Spanish nursing students. \*Religions\*, 11, 596.](#)